

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 10056

E.O. 11652: GDS

SUBJECT: ETHIOPIAN VIEWS A NEW TFAI GOVERNMENT

REF: MOGADISCIO 1064

SUMMARY: A HIGH-LEVEL ETHIOPIAN OFFICIAL HAD INDICATED EPMG'S WILLINGNESS TO WORK WITH NEW TFAI GOVERNMENT FOR THE TIME BEING DESPITE "ILLEGALITY" OF ELECTION WHICH GAVE ABDALLAH MOHAMED KAMIL TFAI COUNCIL PRESIDENCY. ETHIOPIANS ALSO BELIEVE SOMALIS HAVING SECOND THOUGHTS ABOUT FRENCH PRESENCE IN TFAI AFTER INDEPENDENCE. END SUMMARY.

1. IN COURSE OF COURTESY CALL ON BERHANU DINKA, HEAD OF MOFA AFRICA DEPARTMENT, POLITICAL COUNSELOR ASKED FOR EPMG'S VIEWS ON NEW TFAI GOVERNMENT. BERHANU INDICATED THAT ETHIOPIA HAD DECIDED TO WORK WITH THE NEW GOVERNMENT FOR THE TIME BEING, DESPITE THE FACT THAT THE NEW HEAD OF GOVERNMENT, ABDALLAH MOHAMED KAMIL, HAD BEEN ELECTED "ILLEGALLY" IN THAT HE HAD BEEN CIVIL SERVANT RATHER THAN MEMBER OF LEGISLATURE. HE STATED THAT ABDALLAH WAS WELL KNOWN TO THE ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT AND THAT HIS SELECTION HAD BEEN DETERMINED BY THE FRENCH. BERHANU ADDED THAT ABDALLAH HAD NO PPLITICAL BASE IN THE TFAI, WAS NO BETTER QUALIFIED THAN ALI AREF TO BRING TOGETHER THE CONFLICTING
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FACTIONS, AND MIGHT HOLD HIS PRESENT OFFICE FOR ONLY A SHORT

PERIOD.

2. WHILE REAFFIRMING ETHIOPIAN OPPOSITION TO FRENCH PRESENCE IN DJIBOUTI AFTER INDEPENDENCE, BERHANU ALSO CLAIMED THAT SOMALI POSITION ON FRENCH PRESENCE HAD CHANGED IN THE PAST FEW WEEKS TO ONE OF TACIT SUPPORT OF IDEA. BERHANU NOTED THAT AN IMPORTANT FIGURE IN THE DJIBOUTI GOVERNMENT WHO IS CLOSELY LINKED TO THE SOMALIS HAD INDICATED HIS WILLINGNESS TO ALLOW A FRENCH PRESENCE AFTER INDEPENDENCE AND HAD EVEN TOLD FRENCH THAT IT MIGHT BE DESIRABLE TO POSTPONE INDEPENDENCE FOR ANOTHER YEAR OR SO.

3. ONE WOULD EXPECT THE ETHIOPIANS, AS FORMER SUPPORTERS OF ALI AREF, TO BE LESS THAN THRILLED WITH THE PRESENT AFAR-ISSA TFAI COALITION GOVERNMENT. THAT THE PMAC APPEARS TO BE WILLING TO COOPERATE WITH THE NEW GOVERNMENT IS WORTH NOTING, PARTICULARLY SINCE THE AFAR ELEMENTS OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT REPORTEDLY HAVE CLOSE LINKS WITH DEPOSED SULTAN ALI MIRAH.

4. WE BELIEVE THAT BERHANU'S ASSESSMENT THAT ABDALLAH LACKS A POPULAR BASE IS CORRECT, BUT QUESTION THE EXTENT THAT HE IS SOLELY A CREATURE OF THE FRENCH. IT IS MORE PROBABLE THAT CHOICE OF ABDALLAH WAS AGREED TO BY THE ANTI-ALI AREF AFARS AND THE LPAI BECAUSE OF HIS RELATIVE ACCEPTABILITY TO BOTH GROUPS AND THE FRENCH. WE SPECULATE THAT BERHANU HAD HASSAN GOULED IN MIND AS THE "IMPORTANT FIGURE" REFERRED TO IN PARA 2.

5. WHILE WE DISCOUNT VIEW THAT SOMALIS SUPPORT FRENCH PRESENCE IN DJIBOUTI OR THAT FRENCH WILLING TO STAY, GSDR MAY BELIEVE THAT MAJORITY OF AFRICAN GOVERNMENTS WOULD NOT ACCEPT OUTRIGHT SOMALI TAKEOVER OF TFAI BUT THAT AT SAME TIME SITUATION IS MORE FAVORABLE THAN HERETOFORE FOR SOMALI-LED POST INDEPENDENCE GOVERNMENT. AS PRESENT TFAI GOVERNMENT HAS A MAJORITY OF SOMALI SPEAKERS (4 ISSA, 1 ISSAK, 1 GADABOURSI AS OPPOSED TO 4 AFARS), GSDR HAS GOOD REASON TO BELIEVE THAT TFAI VOTING REQUIREMENTS WILL BE RELAXED, THUS ASSURING POST INDEPENDENCE GOVERNMENT DOMINATED BY SOMALI ELEMENTS. SOMALI DIPLOMAT IN ADDIS HAS COMMENTED THAT GSDR "DELIGHTED" BY COMPOSITION OF NEW TFAI GOVERNMENT.

6. EMBASSY MOGADISCIO MAY WISH TO COMMENT ON LIKELYHOOD AND
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POSSIBLE RATIONALE FOR SOMALI SUPPORT OF CONTINUED FRENCH
PRESENCE IN TFAI.
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